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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

AN EXPERIMENT IN OUTDOOR EDUCATION

by

© STEPHEN W. BAKER

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
OF MASTER OF EDUCATION

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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled An Experiment in Outdoor Education submitted by Stephen W. Baker in partial fulfilment of the Requirements for the degree of Master of Education.

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Date ....July 24th 1974..

ABSTRACT

This research aimed to utilize a method of educating elementary school children towards a knowledge of, and a concern for their natural environment. In so doing it allowed serendipitous learning to take place according to the children's own wishes, fantasies and directions.

The context for experimentation was the outdoors; the instrument, Synergetic Ecological Education (S.E.E.) which aims to develop self-created learning situations which are individually motivated and therefore bring about meaningful learning.

The presentation of findings uses three media- written word, spoken word and film in order that the reader/ listener/viewer may, measure for himself by "seeing" the encounters, the results, or rather meaningfulness, of the method. For this is more likely to be found in an expression, tone of voice, "body language" and relationships rather than in measurable quantities.

S.E.E. was operated through a series of encounters with a group of thirteen grade six children in an outdoor setting. The encounters were planned in progression from group activities toward individually created situations. An overall perspective was offered initially, with some exercises, to offer ways of increasing sensory awareness.

Close relationships between persons, animals, plants, elements and objects was at all times encouraged, as was creative expression of feelings both verbal and non-verbal.

As an integral part of the learning situation the writer offers a detailed appraisal of the necessary changes which this approach brought about both personally and in his teaching techniques.

Observations and thoughts on encounters as they proceeded are recorded verbatum, that the reader may feel the situation.

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"The Pioneers".

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Lastly the non-human natural environments, for continual reminders of what is real and their help in my learning to better understand myself.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The time has come when homo sapiens, knowing man, must re-examine the source of his knowledge - his natural environment. For, the growing pollution of our world, the wars of opposing minds and the neurotic hurried pattern of alienated urban lives compares unfavourably with our animal counterparts. It would appear that we are now in a state of disharmony with all that is natural as a result of a preoccupation with that which is self created and anti natural. Unless reintegration of Man and the environment can be achieved harmoniously, then eventual destruction is inevitable. It is the writers belief that, as educators, our task is now of re-education. This research aims to develop one possible way in which this re-education may begin.

The outdoors has been chosen automatically as a necessary environment, for it is the experience of the writer in his many encounters with children that only in this situation when classroom walls are literally non existent that coexisting mental and spiritual barriers also disintegrate. When the timed, programmed teaching-learning situation is exchanged for a dynamic, natural situation then the here and now becomes the motivation for encounters from whence arises meaningful learning.

Furthermore, in joint endeavours in the outdoors it seems that the self can be made known more easily and the I-thou bonds grow and flourish along with the I-It encounters.

It is the belief of the writer that the principles involved here are fundamental to all true learning and fulfill the major objectives of education. If this basic pattern of united cognitive, affective, social learning encounters is established in the elementary school years then the potential for future learning is unlimited. Ultimately the time spent in exploring natural and serendipitous encounters in the early years will more than compensate for formal training in terms of future educational endeavours and life goals. This belief is validated by A.S. Neill's Summerhill experiment. Natural knowledge gained means survival, whereas anti-natural knowledge becomes redundant and destroys.

The underlying method and direction of the encounters is based upon the personal experience that when inner directed motivation to learn is high, then that which is learned, being individually meaningful, will be retained. Outer directed learning needs often to be recorded for reference and is then forgotten. Serendipitous learning in the former situation is encouraged, in the latter, disregarded, for outer directed learning must necessarily have a predetermined aim and goal, which is likely to be inflexible. Furthermore, adults, when planning a teaching program, are often ignorant of the things which children

wish to learn. If the child's wishes, and fantasies are not considered then motivation will obviously be lowered and learning made less meaningful, if it takes place at all.

This thesis is directed at the elementary school child specifically through parents, leaders, coaches and teachers, in the hope that this approach to outdoor education will not only benefit the child in the field, but will have an effect on his regular school program and ultimately his life.

The message that is presented, mere words and symbols of reality, would best be communicated through a pragmatic approach: sensory experience in the field of smelling, tasting, hearing, touching, looking and hopefully seeing: living lessons that change with the seasons. However, the thesis that is, is presented in the form of written material and a film although there are serious limitations to presenting ideas in the form of words pressed on pulp, sounds passed down wires and pictures pushed through valves and tubes. But within the limitations of a thesis the film provides an image of the all important link between knowing and doing.

The Synergetic Ecological Education approach to environmental learning, used as the instrument of this research aims at individual motivation and self created learning situations on the assumption that meaningful, and therefore, retentive learning will take place. (This should be one of the primary objectives of any educator.)

It is outside the scope of this study to make comparative measures of long term retention, although this would be desirable for confirmation of expectations derived from the short term goals which this research explores.

Details of technical procedures of filming, taping, editing and the problems encountered - there were many! - are not included unless it had a bearing on the most important aspect of this research.

Definition of Terms

Outdoor Education: An attempt to find in wilderness and other areas outside of the classroom a new set of values, a richer meaning to life in the hope that man will conserve the natural environment.

Seeing: To perceive mentally an object. Knowledge, understanding of what is important; truth, reality, attention, vision.

Synergy: Behaviour of the whole system unpredicted by behaviour of the systems parts. Nature is comprehensively synergetic.

Environment: Anything which influences or is being influenced by something else.

The Many: is used here as defined by Fowles (1970):

> ..turn their backs on what concerns them most. p.216
>
> ..know neither how to listen nor how to speak. p.216

..Those who are awake have one world in common, those who are asleep (The Many) live each in a private world. p.216.

Natural Knowledge: Information be it spoken, written or experienced thought or perceived in any way that is directed at conserving existence; a life force, an energy free from affectation, artificiality or constraint; simply unaffected; easy, infinitely powerful and indestructable.

Anti Natural Knowledge: That which hides, distorts, takes away from makes more difficult an individual's attempt at seeing.

Synergetic Ecological Education: The name given by the writer to the approach to learning utilized in this study. Namely a method that makes a positive attempt not to separate mind from body, spirit from flesh, and appearance from feeling - a chance to find relevance and unity in existence. An adaptable and dynamic approach which is primarily concerned with the here and now. A re-emphasis of sensory awareness on an inter-environmental basis. An approach to education that emphasizes the need for a more even balance between the cognitive and affective domain of learning. A pupil directed pragmatic approach in which learning is by experiment and primary experience. A method that places the onus on the child to follow that which interests him - knowing that he is ultimately responsible for his own life and education.

CHAPTER II

RATIONALE

Philosophy

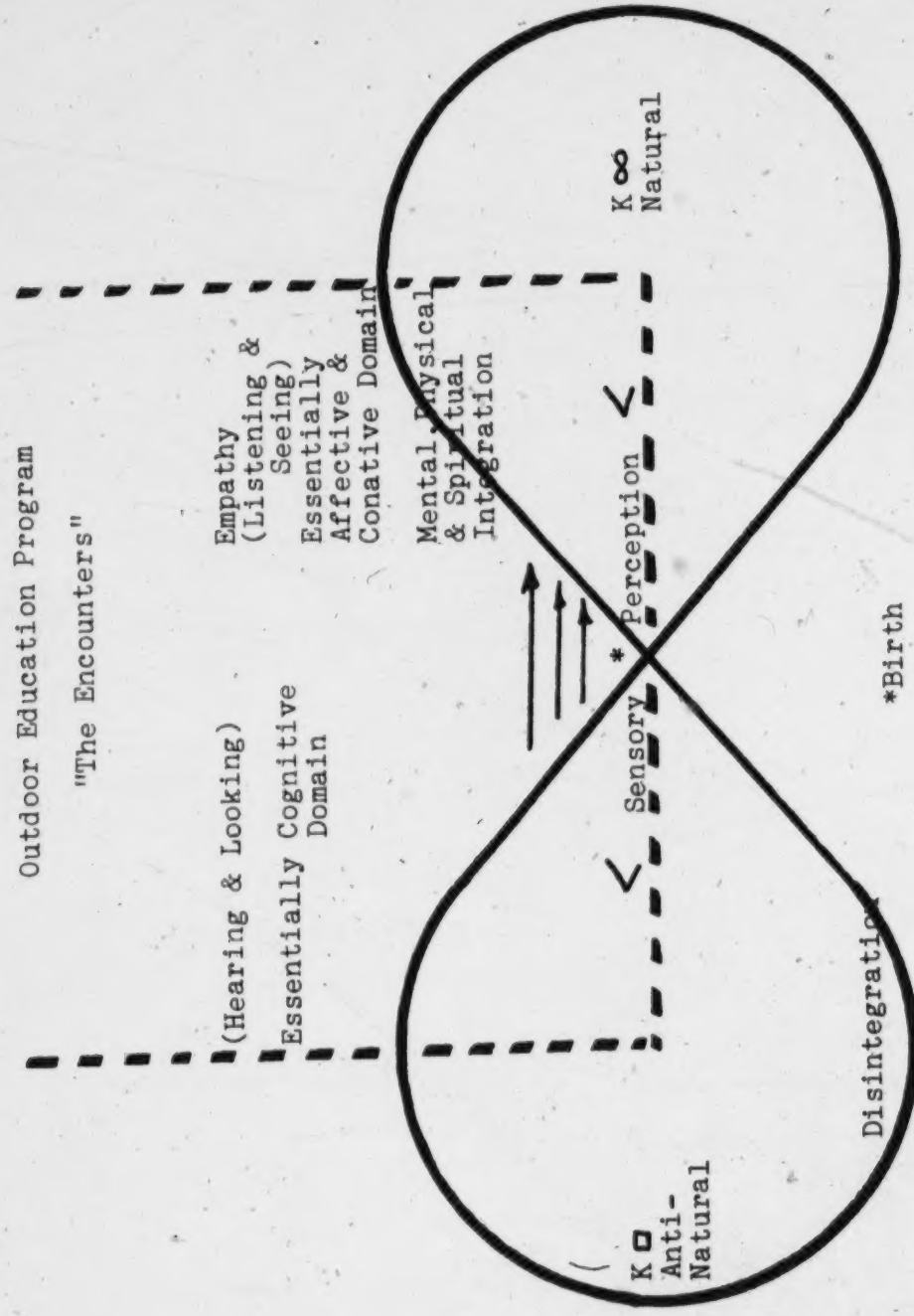
A child is born with a potential for total sensory awareness, but increasing sensory perception is curtailed by others (older children, adults, the media, and schools). The young child naturally,

> . . . explores with a completely open mind. Even eating dirt is perfectly legitimate, if it will help him understand what dirt is.
>
> But as the child matures and progresses through school, he too begins to feel the pressure of the curriculum of studies. He too feels the pressure of his nervous parents worried about his progress, for a young child is very sensitive to what his parents value. When he shows a parent or his teacher a picture he has drawn, the adult might reply, 'How lovely dear'. But when he fills in all blanks in his reading exercise properly and gets an 'A', his parents or teacher are ecstatic. Soon the pictures get shoved aside by the workbooks. Even though more learning may have taken place in the creation of a picture than in the dutiful filling in of blanks in an exercise book! (p.16), (Schindler 1972).

The model (Fig. 1) is a closed figure bilaterally divided into K∞ , natural knowledge, and K□ , anti natural knowledge phases. The two extreme points indicate the type of knowledge and learning finally acquired and to some extent the personality of the individual. The slopes of the figure account for the type of mental and spiritual processes which must be undergone in order to arrive at a particular set of learning, knowledge and values. The mid point of the figure represents the open mind of the young

Fig. 1

Philosophical Perspective for growth in Sensory Awareness through an Outdoor Education Program.



or the seeking mind of an adult. The left hand phase of the figure is governed by a cognitiye domain tending towards K □ The right hand phase, the affective and conative domain, tending towards K ∞ .

The upper portion of the total figure, marked by a dotted line, is that part of the learning process which the S.E.E. program is designed to cover. Traditional school curriculum is seen as, placing children in the same phases as the'Many'. That is essentially cognitive learning pursued without regard to feelings. The S.E.E. program deflects the child back, shown by the arrows, to the upper right hand slope of the figure. That is learning brought about through feeling and understanding.

By encouraging a child to enter, progress and find success only in the worldly essentially cognitive domain, he becomes one of the 'many' advancing possibly to higher education, but regressing on the upward phase of K □ . The term regress is used when K □ , anti natural knowledge lacks perspective and relevance, it becomes a success oriented goal in itself. The trend can be seen in the technological pollution and destruction of the environs of homo sapiens and in the personal tensions of human lives, existing in frustrated technological alienation. Without constant use of the senses alienation from natural knowledge is accelerated. The quality of sensory awareness makes the difference between merely witnessing and performing things

and being touched by them. Arnheim (Cited by Petersen 1972) states, "It is the difference between merely existing and being alive (p.96)". He further comments on sensory awareness "We are born with it. The problem is to preserve it (p.94)".

Rousseau says, "Since everything that enters into human understanding comes through the senses the first reason of man is a reason of the senses. On this the intellectual reason is based." (Boyd 1966,p.54). He adds: Hands, feet and eyes are the first masters of philosophy and to put books in place of these sensory experiences does not teach reasoning, but rather to be credulous and to borrow the reason of others (Boyd 1966,p.54). Piaget (1964) and Brunner (1961) have both emphasized that the more senses that can be involved the better for the learner.

K ∞, natural knowledge, may be reached by very few if education continues to neglect and does not recognize the importance of sensory training. To progress towards a more meaningful and comprehensive education the child's senses and perceptions must be sharpened. The child should be encouraged to see and listen rather than look and hear and he will naturally do. The writer believes that the child may better see if he is not drowned in an ocean of verbiage. "Words, concepts, doctrines, ideas are all very necessary for clarity and consistent action." (Keen 1970, p.160). However, "The word must be rediscovered in the flesh."

What better way for the child to learn the difference between activity and passivity; strength and weakness; tension and relaxation; disease and grace, for example, than by bodily movement:

> It is the source of truth; it is the place to find one's identity; it is the place where one's whole life history is located. It is the place where alterations must be made if permanent psychological changes are to be expected. All experiences are recorded in the body and all are available for recall - in the nervous system, in the muscle in the way the body is held and moved, in the expression of the face, the chronic muscle tension, restrictions of breathing, aberrations of circulation digestion and excretion, the patterns of illness and the acuteness of the senses (p.165),(Schultz 1971).

Keen (1970) adds, "The body has the wisdom to teach that the mind knows not of (p.51)".

According to Arnheim thinking does not take place in the language medium, for language equals sounds and sounds do not contain facts. It was Einstein who wrote that "... the initial grasp of the theory of relativity was a kinesthetic image a certain feeling he would get through his body". (Quoted by Petersen, 1972,(p.56)). This was demonstrated in his unwillingness or inability to speak until he was three years old. This led him

> "...to develop an extraordinary feeling for non-verbal concepts. He could break free of the verbal definitions of time, space and light that blind other physicists. It took him months to find the words to express feelings, but he was always in touch with the basic sensory image... (p.56)"

(Petersen quotes Holton, physicist at Harvard).

The outdoor education encounter is designed primarily to halt the K □ regressive trend by re-emphasizing sensory awareness on an inter environmental relationship basis. It brings the child back to fundamental and basic relationships of which he is inevitably part. He develops what Disch (1970) calls 'cosmic conscience'. He learns not only self awareness and interpersonal relationships but the dynamics of an I-It relationship, being infinitely more important than many men at present perceive, states Aldo (1966).

> There is, as yet, no ethic dealing with man's relationship to land and to the animals and plants which grow upon it. Land, like Odysseus' slave girl, is still property. The land relation is still strictly economic, entailing privileges but no obligations (p.218).

Man's approach to conservation, if based solely on economic self interest will remain hopelessly lopsided for as long as man's education neglects this essentially affective approach for, "We can be ethical only in relation to something we can see, feel, understand, love, or otherwise have faith in". (Aldo 1966, p.230).

Given this understanding at an early age the child may then utilize the cognitive tools which education will give him to a more satisfying and mutually beneficial future. Furthermore, he may be better able to explore creatively potentialities of the future.

Bach (1966) quotes Shaw, "Some people see things as they are and ask why. Others dream of things that never were and ask why not? (p.56)."

Through dreams and fantasies the child has a means of seeking alternatives, past, present and future. Most children and adults "possess a wealth of dreams and fantasies which have never been cherished and taken seriously". (Keen 1970,p.66). The child must be encouraged to see that his wildest dreams, plus, of course, a hint of realism is the "... link between hope and action." (Keen 1970,p.72). The action is then hinged on the child's realization that he is not merely a victim of decisions made by others. Once he accepts responsibility for his past, it will become more readily recognizable the measure of control he has in shaping his dreams for the future. He must realize that with strength and determination he can choose his style of response - he must strive to make his life a story come true. For, without a story of your own to live, you have not got a life of your own.

Need for The Study

Man must decide if he wishes to continue on his present path, and he can only do so when in full possession of the facts. In the words of Rostand, (Quoted by Carson 1970) "The obligation to endure gives us the right to know (p.23)". "During most of man's existence, the outdoors has been his home. In the open spaces he has sought food and shelter, enjoyed what leisure time was available and taught his offspring how to live". (Smith 1963, p.3).

Modern man, however, now living in one of the world's greatest material cultures turns to the outdoors for the natural resources it has to offer or to spend some of his ever increasing leisure time, taking with him his materialistic values that are pursued in deadly earnest by a culture that is devoted to production, consumption and war hardware. The accumulated effects of the industrial age have created a world of specializations and meaningless jobs and lives. A world of abstractions, words and spectators. It appears that man is not aware of what he is destroying in his short sighted greed to live off the land rather than with it. Shomon (1968) supports this thesis when he says "Man is dangerously altering his environment - air and water pollution threatens his healthy surroundings and even his way of life (p.11)". Schwietzer, (Quoted by Carson 1962) concurs, saying "Man can hardly even recognize the devils of his own creation (p.17)".

It would appear that education has led to man's alienation from and carelessness of his treatment of the environment and himself. An education that places an emphasis on extrinsic rewards thus laying the foundation for future pursuits of knowledge for personal gain rather than individual enrichment. Tolly (Cited by Pisker 1967) says of it: "Too often in the classroom intellectual enquiry becomes an exercise in success instead of an experience in learning (p.29)". According to Fowles (1970) education it

would seem is directed almost exclusively to two ends: 1. To gain wealth for the state. 2. To gain livelihood for the individual. "It is therefore, little wonder that society is money obsessed, since the whole tenor of education seems to indicate that this obsession is both normal and desirable" (Fowles 1970, p.216).

The writer agrees with Keen (1970) when he says how much more satisfactory it would be if the two primary foci of education were: 1. To initiate the young into the accumulated wisdom and techniques of culture. 2. To prepare the young to create beyond the past, to introduce novelty and to utilize freedom.

This line of research is needed to bring a change to the present non-synergetic approach to the child's education. Too many teachers have the same outlook on a child's schooling as does 'Mrs. Jones' says Keen (1970):

> As a teacher I must make a strict separation between the public and the private; the factual and the emotional; the objective and the subjective. Education in public schools, has no right to invade the privacy of emotions, values or religious beliefs of individual students. A teacher must stick to those matters which can be communicated to the pupil in an antiseptic, objective manner (p.40).

It is the belief of too many adds Keen (1970) that:

> The principle of the separation of the church and state implies that public education may not deal with matters of value which are inseparable from subjective, emotional, biographical and religious commitment. The quest for wisdom, for identity, for ecstasy, like summer warblers must remain outside the classroom (p.40).

It was Aldo (1966) who said that "Education, I fear, is learning to see one thing by going blind to another (p.158)".

Cay (1966) comments, that there is too much "... emphasis on skill building and not enough on assisting pupils to find personal meaning in the search for self and to building satisfying relationships with others (p.5)".

It is the contention of this thesis that very often the present approaches to educating the child tend "... to foster a common intellectual skill: thinking the world to pieces". (McInnis 1972, p.243). This skill, of analysis, reductionism, specialization, departmentalization; the various techniques for fragmenting knowledge of the world, have made possible man's technological progress: but it is only half way to understanding.

According to the gestalt psychologists the child relates to the world in the manner that he perceives it. So it is little wonder that, unless checked, he proceeds through life tearing the planet to pieces for he has not been given the opportunity to find unity and relevance in existence. It is the responsibility of schools, administrators and teachers to present unified studies, for it is irrelevant lessons taught in an unrelated manner which build up frustrations, and antagonisms against learning, or rather schooling. These two are not always synonomous. Postman and Weingartner (1969) quote Shaw as having stated that the time spent attending school was the only period of his life

that his education was interrupted. Many students still hold the same opinion and become the drop outs. Others remain in school waiting to be educated, out of touch most of the time as they tune in and out at will. Some play the game and come up with good grades thus encouraging the teachers to believe that they are doing a fine job. Fuller concurs thus:

> We take the whole child and fractionize the scope of his or her comprehending coordination by putting the children in elementary schools to become preoccupied with elements or isolated facts only. Thereafter we force them to choose some specialization, forcing them to forget the whole. We start them off with planes and straight lines which run into infinity, that no scientist has ever produced experimentally and therefore we defy the child to comprehend and require that they accept and believe that it is logical to assume 'infinity'. Therefore to give up the child's innate propensity to learn by experiment and experience, recourse to which exclusively experimental reasoning made possible, Einstein' epochal orientation of all scientific theory (p.175),(Disch 1970).

Education should not be regarded as a substitute for experience for when this is so states Disch (1970) it is no surprise that:

> ... our practical projects have run into confusion again and again through failure to see that individual people, nations, animals, insects and plants do not exist by themselves. This is not to say that things exist in relation to one another, but that what we call things are no more than glimpses of a unified process (p.118).

Every discipline, be it humanities, arts or sciences, must for its own special standpoint develop a science of ecology; literally the logic of the household.

Unfortunately, at present, this science of ecology says Watts (Disch 1970) " ... runs a foul of academic politics (p.180)". "... being much too interdisciplinary for the jealous guardians of departmental boundaries (p.180)". Subject areas should become more closely interrelated so that present and subsequent generations be allowed this synergetic approach to learning and education. Both child and adult need to perceive the world as a gestalt, for this neglect is the one most serious weakness of modern technology: "... our reluctance to be participant members of the whole community of living species" (Disch 1970, p.180). The onus is on the schools and those who teach. "No institution presently does more to shape/mis-shape our perception of the world than our schools". (McInnis 1972,p.243).

Individuals are educated in a system that frequently confuses education with propaganda, and education with obedience and discipline. Education must allow the individual the questions which are not being answered, and the life options not being explored. Questions that to date have been considered disrespectful, outgrown, simplistic, taboo, dangerous and politically forbidden,must be answered. Issues can no longer be avoided. Only truth will penetrate the vacuum and allow growth and life. In time lies are self defeating. Tolley (Quoted by Piskor 1967) says "Modern war is the wildest form of insanity because it is so completely self destructive and irrational. War makers will come only from nations that censor truth and practice the rule of the

lie (p.27)".

Thus it seems that education often leads to man's alienation from and careless treatment of the environment and himself. The program suggested and explored in this thesis is a beginning - a move toward relevance in institutionalized education. The research is approached with enthusiasm and optimism, as is the encounter with the students in the outdoors, for there is a great deal right about the world. Students, says Cornish (1972), need to know it, if they are to have the courage and will to correct that which is wrong.

> Today we have a growing number of tools with which to solve the problems that we face. Some of these tools like the computer and nuclear technology, are new and strange to us, and we are likely to fear them. But they can help us immeasurably to make the world more beautiful and humane than it has ever been before. Mankind has a real chance now to create a utopia on this planet (p.245), (Cornish 1972).

Purpose of The Research

It is the purpose of this research:

1. To encounter the natural environment along with a group of children and direct their explorations by a synergetic ecological education approach. In so doing to learn more about this technique.

2. To discover if S.E.E. can be introduced into a formal school situation immediately.

3. To learn how the writer as a formal educator must adjust both personally and educationally to a program that is essentially pupil directed.

4. To see if the environment becomes more meaningful to children when they are 'trained' and encouraged to become more sensorily aware.

5. To find out if a pupil directed pragmatic approach leads to serendipitous encounters and learning.

6. To discover children's response when their ideas, thoughts, feelings and fantasies are made a part of the learning situation.

7. To allow children to take up roles of teacher/pupil according to their abilities in a given situation.

CHAPTER III

PLANNING FOR THE ENCOUNTERS

The approach of the program is within the bounds of a democratic elementary school program. However, in order to foster the fullest development of each child's potentialities, the intimate, the proximate, the sensuous, the autobiographical and the personal will not be neglected. On the contrary, positive action is taken to try not to separate mind and body, spirit from flesh and appearance from feeling. It is necessarily individualistic so that the child can first learn to appreciate, attend and revere his own body and mind, work out for himself a realistic relationship between himself and others; himself and objects; and ultimately give life and nature a chance. He will develop an outdoor conscience against careless pollution, desecration and insensitive killing by the loveless technological society in which he at present finds himself.

The rendezvous is the mountains, streams, fields, lakes and streets; freed from the boundaries of classroom contained learning. It realizes the value of learning living lessons in a life setting. Jackson, a leading British educationalist aptly comments in a radio broadcast in 1973 that, "A good classroom is an empty one". He also points out that there is no evidence that modern buildings, complex audio-visual equipment, and small class sizes have any posi-

tive bearing on the child's education. Alternatively, the theme is freedom, from teacher dominated classrooms, from school imposed petty regulations and from a curriculum that is no longer relevant.

Scene of the Encounter

An elementary school Grade 6 Outdoor Laboratory was used as the scene of the encounter for the following reasons:

1. The writer was employed by this school board for the 1970-71 period, and is familiar with the education program and the personnel that run it.

2. The writer attended the 1971 Outdoor Laboratory as an instructor, where he introduced and supervised instruction in backwoodsmanship and archery.

3. The writer visited the Outdoor Laboratory in 1972. This time accompanied by a colleague who assisted with and gave advice on the filming of their camp.

4. The camp organizer and school board were willing to allow the writer, along with another helper/instructor, to take a small group of the Grade 6 students with whom they could implement the research program.

5. The writer was given a relatively free hand to do as he wished and had been given access to any equipment needed to run the program.

Organization of The Encounters

The research program was operated from May 28th through June 1st at the rural elementary Grade 6 Outdoor Laboratory. The writer acted as instructor, cameraman, sound effects man and observer. He was also accompanied by a female instructor/observer.

The encounter was filmed in super 8 and taped and recorded in sufficient detail to make as realistic a record of the work done as possible.

The problem of transporting, billeting and feeding the group remained essentially the problem of the camp organizer. The writer, however, assumed responsibility for instruction, informal recreation, and sleep outs for the group assigned to him for the duration of the encounter.

Outline of The Encounters

The encounters, for the sake of clarity and planning purposes were set out in units. However, it was of utmost importance that the curriculum remain adaptable and dynamic. Every effort was therefore made at the operational stage in the field to interrelate, crosscheck and integrate each unit. It was also considered important that individuals be allowed to follow those areas of studies within the program that stimulated their immediate interests. This way of working in the here and now was anticipated to promote more relevant and individualized learning situations.

The time span of the encounters varied considerably depending on factors such as interest shown, unforeseen happenings or discoveries and weather. The only limitations on length of encounters were those dictated by reason of meeting up with the main group for joint sessions. These included time set apart for visits from outside resource people, camp clean ups and meal times. It was quite conceivable for example, that the group referred to as the pioneers, might take a break for a swim during their project work if they so desired.

There were no rules laid down other than those that the writer deemed necessary to prevent damage or injury to the environment, be it tree, animal or child. At the same time it must be considered that these encounters came under the auspices of the school board. The children, therefore, had to work within and abide by the policies so laid down for school activities.

Along with equipment and materials made available for the encounter, a selected library (see Appendix A.) of mainly reference books with some fiction was made available to cater for the children's interest and needs.

Operational Objectives - Long and Short Term Aims of The Synergetic Ecological Approach to Learning

1. A more meaningful approach to institutionalized education.

2. To humanize and further individualize learning.

3. To create more powerful ways of nurturing and integrating the child's feelings and values with his intellectual development.

4. The development not of a new curriculum, but rather a multi-disciplinary approach to existing curricula with a balanced emphasis on cognative, conative, and effective domains.

5. To provide a wholistic approach to education.

6. Education for the here and now as well as for future life and career.

7. To widen the circumference of the child's world.

8. To make more obvious to the child the importance he, as an environment has on shaping and modifying other environments.

9. To see more clearly the part that other beings, animals, plants have in the balance of nature.

10. For the child to assume responsibility for himself and other environments.

11. To realize the importance of quiet reflection as opposed to frantic action.

12. To develop the important balance between being and doing.

13. To stimulate spontaneous concentration.

14. To provide interesting and enjoyable learning experiences.

15. To open, make possible, explore a variety of ways of communication.

16. To develop more accurately the child's sensory awareness.

Outline of Curriculum for The Encounters

The first stage was essentially a time for orientation and familiarization of environment. The curriculum as such was to include the following elements:

1. Fundamental backwoodsmanship, including building and maintenance of the headquarters for the encounters.

2. Sensory training.

3. Crosschecking sensory imputs.

4. Expressing the seen through non-verbal communication.

5. Reverse roles with other environments.

6. Express the seen verbally and in writing.

7. Study the credit/debit nature of the environment.

8. Project work (small groups).

9. A multi-disciplinary sharing and comparing of the observations made and recorded in the project work.

10. Discussion of knowledge gained in the local environment and its import in application to other more distant environments.

11. Consideration of problems to be faced in trying to attain a utopic world.

12. Periods of informal recreation to include wide games, and personal expression through arts and crafts.

ENCOUNTER PLANS

Encounter No. 1

Specific Aim. To discuss and decide upon group policies. To familiarize children and instructors with the new environments. To set up headquarters from which encounters can evolve or be directed.

Introduction to backwoodsmanship.

Approach. Outline program and activities. Make clear the relationship between the pioneers and the main school party. To create an understanding of self initiated and directed encounters within the community. The instructors position is that of resource person rather than teacher per se.

Discuss the necessary safety precautions for encounters. Construction of shelter for headquarters: to include choice of site, types of material used, use of axes and knives. Discuss methods and precautions of fire lighting. Construct fires.

Determine the availability of drinking water and ways of procuring it. Collection and preparation of natural foods stuffs.

Encounter No. 2

Specific Aim. To attempt by exercises to increase the child's awareness of his senses.

Approach. Games and observations using the various senses.

1. Sight.

Prior to the encounter, stones, flowers, leaves, sand, wood, pencil, knife, etc., are gathered, placed down and covered, shown to the students and covered again. They are then asked to name the largest object; the smallest object; all round objects; all green and red objects.

The group is taken on a hike to explore the environment. Areas of senses are exercised when and where it seems possible to do without making the situation too artificial.

2. Sound.

Close your eyes and listen. What do you hear - inside - outside?

3. Touch.

Partners - (a) select object, (b) close eyes. Handle the object, describe and name it. Change over. (a) select object, (b) close eyes. Feel the object on the most sensitive parts of the body, for example: lips, fingers, back of hands and forehead. Pass objects around the group with eyes closed, each claiming their own object when it comes.

4. Smell.

Smell various items - wet wood, grass, soil, etc. Smell different places. Distinguish smells of weeds and flowers.

5. Taste.

Flower blossoms, own skin, grass.

6. The Brain.

Be aware of the input from all the senses to form imagery.

Encounter No. 3

Specific Aim. To introduce the children to small group work in the natural environment. To provide the children with the opportunity to explore and do tasks away from headquarters, unsupervised. To demonstrate to the children the infinite wealth of knowledge, and variety and depth of interesting learning situations that are provided by the natural environment. To increase awareness. To integrate and utilize knowledge and work done in schools. To encourage children to use their initiative.

Approach. Children set out on a trek in a defined area to discover the things enumerated below, plus anything different or further which interests them. Assembly to discuss and exchange findings and experiences.

1. What evidence of animals are there in this area?
2. What evidence of man is there?
3. How many different trees do you encounter?
4. What can you discover about the lake?
5. What do you learn about the power of water?
6. What is the difference in flora and fauna between the lake side and a swamp bog?
7. What kind of plants could provide food for man?
8. What happens to plants when they die?

9. Can you find out about food chains?

10. Where do trees grow and why?

11. How many different colours of nature can you find in this area?

12. Which smells do you like best?

13. Taste various blossoms but beware of swallowing.

14. Find some twigs that tell you that they were new last spring.

15. Can you find out how old the trees are?

16. Are there any destructive forces in this environment?

17. What do you think this area will be like in ten years time?

18. What do you see when you look due north?

19. Can you tell the time by the sun?

20. Sit in a quiet spot. Feel it. Write a story or poem or draw. Could you dance it?

Encounter No. 4

Specific Aim. To see what develops when children are allowed a period of time in which they are left on their own.

Approach. Meet with the children and discuss what possible encounters are open to them. Think of necessary precautions to prevent mishap or injury. Listen to individual plans and offer help if required. Re-assemble fifteen minutes prior to closure of unit to discuss activities and awareness gained.

Encounter No. 5

Specific Aim. To explore the nature, properties and influence of the four elements, air, earth, fire, water on the environment.

Approach. Groups meet to discuss and make preliminary investigations as to the nature of their research and to consider equipment needed to put it into operation. To carry out the experiments. Discussion of research and findings.

Encounter No. 6

Specific Aim. A visit to bird island in order that the children might observe a natural community.

Approach. Discussion of travel arrangements; safety factors, precautions. Observation suggestions such as:

1. Draw a map of the island.
2. Locate different birds.
3. Look at nest construction.
4. How do the birds feed their young?
5. How is territory defended?
6. If you were an artist, what aspect would you choose to portray?
7. Sit quietly and feel the place - see, listen, smell, taste.
8. Actualize a creative inspiration - story, poem, etc.
9. What pollution is there?

At the closure of the visit time is given to exchange ideas and describe encounters.

Encounter No. 7

Specific Aim. To attempt to draw a comparison between communities such as the pioneer community; Hutterite Colony; bird island.

Approach. Assemble at headquarters and leave the task with the children, suggesting the possibility of small group discussions. Outline the nature of comparisons, e.g. inter-dependence of communities; livelihood; life styles; effect on local environment; pollution.

Encounter No. 8

Specific Aim. For the children to understand the benefit of combining both cognitive and affective experiences when planning potential, individual life styles.

Approach. Each person is asked to think about his feelings, fantasies and other findings of the last few days. On this basis to consider what type of community if it existed, he would opt to be a member of. Talk together about various utopic communities. Discuss problems of putting thoughts and dreams into action in an attempt to live idealistic life styles. Consideration of compromises to make it work.

(See fig. ii page 32 for a tentative timetable for the encounters.)

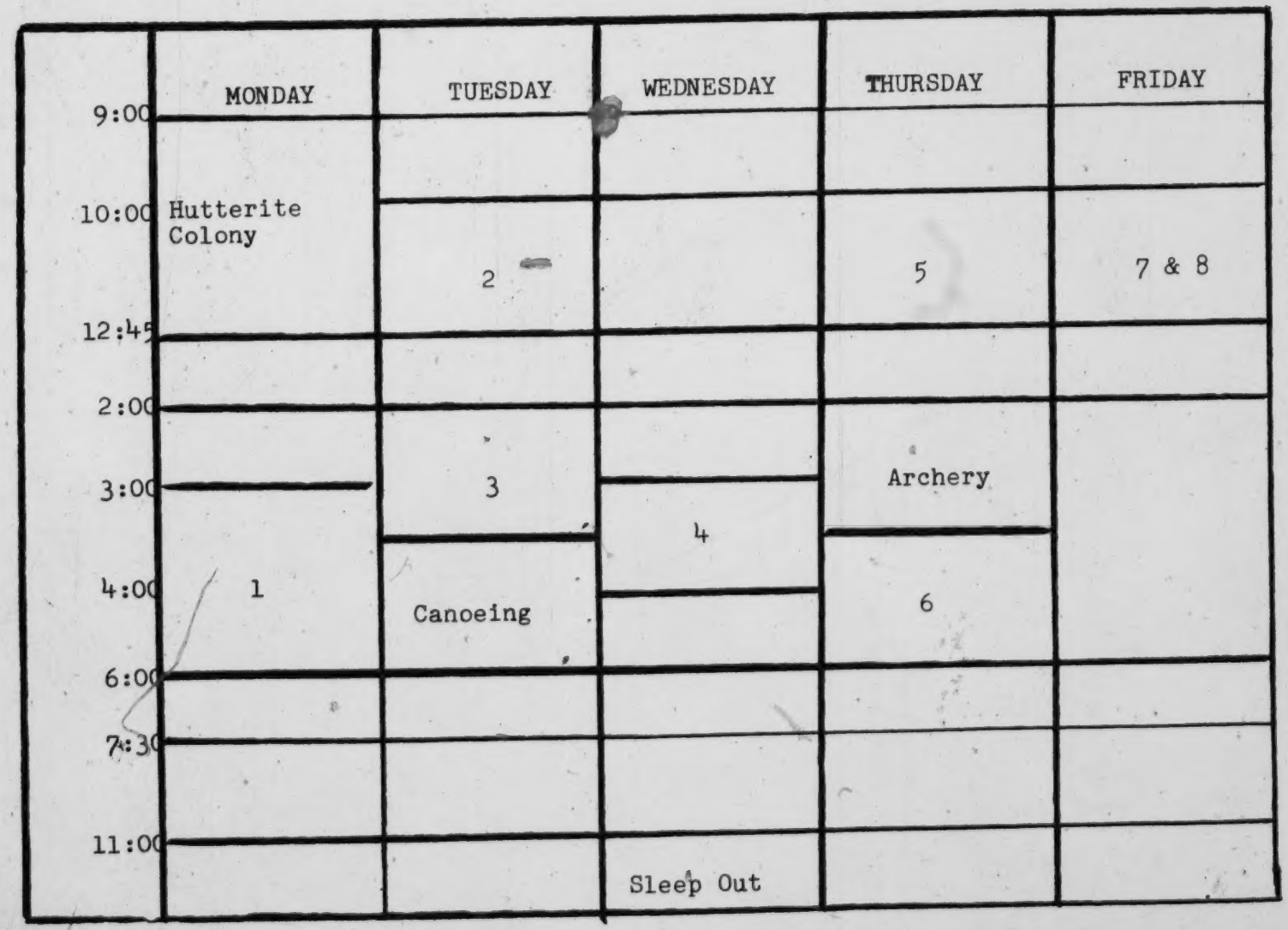


Fig. 11
Tentative Timetable for Encounters

CHAPTER IV

THE ENCOUNTERS - OBSERVATION & THOUGHTS

Day 1

Meeting. From the organizational aspect it would have been better had the writer been present at the pre-camp meeting when volunteers were asked for the pioneer group, as it appeared that this group did not truly represent a cross-section as hoped. Four girls were withdrawn on this first morning for reasons unknown.

Visit to the Hutterite Colony. The group was integrated into the large group for this activity.

Encounters

Progression and Observation. The weather was cold and wet which deterred any program in backwoodsmanship. Rather than adhering to schedule therefore, the adaptability of both instructors and children was felt to be required in the circumstances. Ironically, at the very outset of the program new plans became necessary.

The group assembled in one of the huts. The writer presented himself, the program, and his ideas. The role of helper/advisor was stressed rather than that of teacher. The students were immediately handed the initiative for work activities directions and progressions. At this point the group appeared skeptical of this 'new' approach,

particularly having difficulty in accustoming themselves to the instructors as friends and helpers rather than teachers.

Safety factors were outlined as were the rules and regulations of the main camp to which the pioneers must adhere at times of reintegration.

For reasons already stated a new encounter plan for the day was needed and the initiative for this was placed with the group. The following discourse took place:

Instructor:	"What shall we do now?"
Group:	No positive suggestions.
Instructor:	Feeling worried by the inactivity and his preconceived notions that teaching meant doing and talking, started a discussion on the Hutterite Colony. "What did you learn on the visit this morning?"
Group:	Opened up notebooks.
Instructor:	Asked them to close notebooks. "Have you got poor memories?"
Group:	"No." "Yes."
Instructor:	The indication was that these notes were for their teacher.

Further discussion revealed that both boys and girls had very different and distinct impressions and information about their visit without the aid of their notebooks. Thus it was possible to show that their memories had stored what was worthwhile to them and by example set a pattern for the

week. It was mutually decided that from this point written work was not necessary unless it was personally felt to be needed.

Instructor: "Are you bored?"

Group: "Yes" They wished to do something and were waiting for leadership.

Instructor: Decide to leave them for a while to exchange ideas and then decide as a group or individually what they would like to do. Some time later the group mass decided that they would like to explore the area together.

Exploration. The group led the way choosing their own route. Some comments heard along the way: "We're not getting anything done". "Hey, this is fun" and "We've seen so much stuff".

It was found that teachable moments readily arose for the purpose of imparting information, but the children were not particularly interested. They were not at this stage ready for information. They were busy exploring rather than seeking answers. They did not need a teacher.

After some time, in order to widen the area of exploration, the instructor suggested laying a trail and having the group follow it. This suggestion they accepted. Some of them led, the others followed. The leaders worked eagerly along the trail but the other preferred to continue their explorations along the way; for example jumping in sand

pits. Comments of "I'm cold" led to the suggestion of a fire.

Fire Lighting. The few children who wished to light a fire tried for some time in the wet condions with little success so that the instructor intervened and offered help. After a while the children still feeling cold, decided that they would like to return to camp for a change of clothing, which seemed a reasonable request even though the allotted time was not through. Many stayed in their cabin for the remaining half hour, although a few began to drift outside to talk with the instructors about their finds. Discussion centered around the mouse - its food, feelings, fear expressions, and led into consideration of man and war. An empathy with nature was achieved by reversing roles with the mouse in imagination.

Thoughts of the Day. Children listen when they want to. This listening is not always obvious. Ordering the children to, "Listen to me," does not guarantee that which is spoken will be heard.

As a teacher the writer tends unwittingly to immediately categorize students, for example, the quiet, shy child, the noisy one, these are going to be 'problems'. Not true.

Adults tend to view things from a philosophical perspective whereas children live the here and now, which is sufficient for them.

When plans are thrown aside encounters which were desired appear to arise naturally, for example, fire lighting.

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
9:00					
10:00	Hutterite Colony	Meeting Encounters: Sensory Awareness	Meeting Encounters: Individual and Group	Meeting Encounter: Tracking	Meeting Final Encounters
12:45					
2:00		Encounters: Backwoodsmanship Swimming	Encounter: Bird Island		
3:00	Meeting Encounters: Exploration Firelighting				
4:00		Encounter Canoeing	Encounter: Archery		
6:00					
7:30			Encounter: Canoeing		
11:00		Encounter: Sleep out			

Fig. 111
Actual Timetable for Encounters

It is important to encourage and allow the children to participate in the making of important decisions.

Good instruction and guidance is most needed when the child's motivation is low. The writer has a tendency to assume the worst of children's motives, for example, the mouse in the jar was not cruelty but protection from the other children in the hut back at the main camp. Technical difficulties of teaching, filming and recording at the same time are greater than imagined.

Do not attempt to tell children more than they care or need to know. Children need help to become independent, and to become independent they must be allowed to be free. Freedom is necessary if children are to learn from their own mistakes. They must learn to accept and cope with both failure and success.

Experiencing hardships and problems can aid motivation to learn, and can often bring about truly creative solutions.

The instructor can help make success possible.

Day 2

Assembly. The writer suggested identifying the previous day's findings in reference books. (see Appendix A). He offered the books for the children's use at any time during the week. They were not interested. The books were not used either then or later. Implications? It could be that the children had not yet learned the real place and value of

literature as a true aid to learning and understanding. Or simply that in the limited time available first hand experience was sufficiently interesting and absorbing that books and reading could be left for a later date; when they had time, or felt the need to reflect on that which is most meaningful, doing!

The sensory awareness encounter was presented as planned. The weather was warm and sunny.

Observation. The game of sight observations proved to be outside of the children's expectations. At first they counted the objects and named them rather than looking at them. After a few more attempts they learned to observe more closely.

This time while exploring, the instructors shared with the children their own feelings and observations. This helped increase the children's awakened enthusiasm. Many of the group applied their cognitive learning to the situation. Some of the children obviously possessed a wealth of natural knowledge - far more than is gleaned from books. Students shared their knowledge with other members of the group, including the instructors.

Upon suggestion from the writer a number of students wished to sleep out: a requirement for a shelter.

Backwoodsmanship - Shelter Building. The instructor suggested that they select a site. This they did in small groups. A selection was finally made. All collected

necessary materials. Some wished to build a fire again and did so very efficiently, by contrast to the previous day. There was a discussion on the use of axes and knives, information being deduced from individual comments rather than from a lecture.

Although the shelter was not complete some of the group wished to go for a swim. Most then followed and went with one instructor to the swimming area. The writer and one boy stayed to finish the shelter.

Canoeing. The group decided to learn by doing in the first half hour, so they took to the canoes in safe water without any instruction. Life jackets were worn. They returned after half an hour to exchange information and ask questions. It was found that they were able now to instruct each other by pooling their experiences. However, timely questioning by the writer helped direct the learning in the direction he deemed desirable in order that the children be given the opportunity to fully explore the potentialities of the activity.

Thoughts of the Day. The writer must listen to and trust his inner knowledge, intuition, insight and hunches. It is necessary to disclose one's inner self in this type of teaching situation.

Programs were not as individualized as hoped for. Some members of the group make decisions, others just follow. Possibly, truly individualized instruction is not at all times desirable!

Children enjoy sitting and talking between activities. It is not always necessary to look for teaching moments for this is valuable in itself. Children command the attention of other children easily and readily; they do not have to tell them to listen. Feedback, help and some sharing is essential to help the child increase his awareness. Maybe children need some guidance in order to see the unifying principle of learning encounters.

False enthusiasm is not valid in the eyes of children. Children do not have to like the things that their teacher likes. If they do not, this must not be misinterpreted as a personal affront. Initially it is an aid to increasing the children's awareness if the instructor offers advice solely in the form of bringing phenomena to their attention.

Sleep Out. With the exception of four girls all the group decided to sleep out plus another girl and her friend from the main group. This girl was very miserable at camp and had asked to be allowed to go home. However, she decided that prior to that she would try sleeping out with the pioneers. Following this experience she stayed at camp for the remainder of the week.

Observation. The first part of the journey to the shelter at headquarters was done with the aid of flashlights. It was then suggested that they may see better without them. Much to their amazement, their eyes were perfectly adequate. The party bedded down in the shelter.

The writer then selected his sleeping spot several feet away from the main party. All settled into their shelter quickly and expressed happiness at being away from the huts of the main camp. Comments were evident on the construction of the shelter. The builders were congratulated. Some covered their heads and said nothing, others looked around them. One boy asked for quiet so that he may listen to the sounds of the night. The writer asked that no one leave the site, and to wake him only in an emergency. Further chatter ranged from how to dispose of a toad that wandered into the shelter, to more aesthetic topics of the smoke, clouds and shadows.

Day 3

Again new plans had to be made due to a major timetabling reorganization. Resource people had to be reallocated times, therefore the pioneer group was forced to rearrange the time and content of encounters which had been planned in progression. This disrupted the unity and build up of the program.

Meeting. The group exchanged experiences, thoughts and feelings got from the sleep out. This involved acting out of fantasies and fears which became very humourous at times. The instructor outlined the necessary changes in schedule and suggested that the group now take advantage of the availability of a motor boat and driver to ferry them to bird island that afternoon. This was agreed upon. The

mornings activities had yet to be decided. The writer here, possibly wrongly, gave the group little option as he wished at the time to condense the individual group encounters that had been planned as lead ups to the bird island encounter. It is now regretted that this was done without awareness of the group's feelings.

Encounters

Progression. The outlined program (planned encounters 3, 4 and 5) was shortened thus: Take pencil and paper and go out alone to make some observations of interesting phenomena, sights, sounds or signs. Consider your questions and thoughts. Sit in a quiet spot. Select one of the following: write a poem; sketch. Return to headquarters and exchange experiences.

Observations. Children wandered off in all directions but with few exceptions soon joined up with a friend or small group. They reassembled shortly with little or nothing to report. They had written little which was reasonable in the light of our previous decision - indeed it was rather an unreasonable request on the part of the instructor. The girls however, motivated by one individual were busy writing short poems with a great deal of success. They reluctantly were persuaded to read them to the group, but were pleased with the enthusiastic reception that they received.

Encounter 5

Meeting. To help small group research the instructor suggested that the children stay in their smaller groups of the last encounter and investigate anything which may interest them suggesting that they may even wish to continue with their poetry. The research content planned, investigating the elements, was not outlined. But as previously found the topics arose naturally in the course of other investigations, and situations directed by the children's developing interests.

Small Group Activities. The 'poets' set off to search for and gather different types of moss. Stimulated by previous finds they now wanted to cultivate a moss garden.

Another group experimented with a magnifying glass, lit yet another fire, and set about to discover the combustion points of various materials found. The aim being to see what substances could be used in the outback for kindling a fire. One substance which was tested was the paper on which they had written their results!

One boy, following up an earlier observation that water condensed underneath the polythene ground sheet, set up a series of experiments, with the help of an instructor, to discover under what conditions and by what methods water could be collected.

The remaining group members sat, by outer appearance, uninspired and undisturbed in the shelter. Apparently they were waiting for the more exciting afternoon's activities.

Thoughts of the Morning. Children and instructors feel that they need some sort of schedule, maybe due to the presence of the main group who were always busy writing and learning lessons. It is important to stimulate the child's curiosity, for if his attention and interests are not caught, learning is minimal.

Children will persevere to get something that they really want. It has been evident that at least four of the group are becoming aware of the instructors as people with feelings, rather than teaching machines. For example, they asked to go canoeing that evening but were concerned that maybe we were too tired, in which case it didn't matter.

The night spent out in the open, together and away from the main group did much to develop the affective experiences sought. Also more intimate exchange of thoughts and feelings served to unite the group and build personal bonds. The teacher directed encounters served only to disunite the group and confused the children, now that they were becoming accustomed to having a say in activities.

Failure can motivate the more able children. Success motivates all. Extrinsic rewards prove helpful in learning, again this is more applicable to the lower ability child. However, rewards act only as a temporary motivator.

Does external lead to internal motivation? If an instructor empathizes with the group and the timing is right, it is not wrong to prompt individuals to act against their will, e.g. reading the poems to the rest of the group.

However, it is important that the individuals be informed prior to the experience and that the presentation be worth doing. Genuine praise is appreciated. In contrast to the chatter and busy exploring, many children like to find from time to time a spot alone and just sit, and watch, and listen.

Thoughts of the Afternoon. Children and instructors require and benefit from periods of time during encounters where they may just sit and do nothing.

Instructors must be adaptable and possess a wealth of skills and knowledge especially in areas when built in dangers are high, for example archery, canoeing and swimming. While in a natural setting children appear to empathize greatly with their environment, particularly with living things - animals and birds specifically. A generalization rather than a specific approach to encounters seems to be preferred.

Physical comfort is inconsequential when children are absorbed. For reasons unknown, a child may search out details of an apparently uninteresting subject. They appear to have quite different interests and motives from adults. Adults must make a positive effort to understand that which interests children. Children quickly take on responsibility for their own work and behaviour when they wish to do so.

An atmosphere of competition quickly changes to one of cooperation when children are given the responsibility for individual learning and solutions to problems. A group

of children can speak at one time and still absorb the information they require to use at a later date. Learning is unselected.

An instructor must always be truthful and never break promises. Great care is required of an instructor if he is not to fail in the areas such as praise, commendation, love and affection. Children, are becoming more sensitive to others feelings and respond with kindness and understanding.

Encounters

Bird Island: Observations. The visit to bird island was approached with interest and enthusiasm. The children were overwhelmed with the spectacle of movement and noise. No motivation was necessary on the part of the instructor as questions regarding types of birds, nest construction, feeding habits, etc., were fast and spontaneous. Nor did the instructor need to answer, for the members were well capable of supplying each other with information.

The children seemed more eager than in other encounters to explore alone, although there was a great eagerness to share sights and experiences. This was particularly evident when one boy inadvertently stepped on an egg. All were upset, but they examined the egg, decided that the young embryo would not survive and so buried it so that the mother would not be upset.

Children were continually exchanging knowledge and fantasies and feelings, such as which bird they loved best and why. They missed little, exploring every area of the island.

Archery. As with the canoeing a pragmatic approach after the preliminary discussion on safety factors. It was necessary that equipment be shared but no formalized method was put forward as to how this would be done. Two boys, the "experts" who had done archery before were encouraged to get started. The others asked for a little help, which was given initially by one of the instructors.

Observations. One of the "experts" appeared to be quite proficient and returned frequently to the group to give assistance. This included teaching one of the instructors, both teacher and pupil being delighted with the progress. Information both visual and spoken was constantly being interchanged, a continuous process of looking, listening and trying. Only occasionally was information asked of the instructor who was cognizant of this sport. When information was sought he gave it, but following the example of the "expert", answered only specific questions.

The equipment was not shared equally but no one seemed upset. Adjustments in group size and participation were made continuously. The activity was not enjoyed by all, so that after some time the hot weather prompted some to return to camp where they lay in the shade or continued with some activity started earlier.

The archers learnt to keep score and had a friendly game, constantly praising and encouraging those who were not too adept. Again physical discomfort, hot sun, and feet on thistles, was forgotten in the enthusiasm.

Canoeing. On the evening of day three, two boys approached the instructor to ask if it would be possible to go out canoeing. This was arranged and nine members of the group opted to go.

Observations. After a trial run it was obvious that the group's proficiency was much improved so that it was possible to fulfil their desire to go further afield and explore. It was decided to head for Rock Island, the weather was settled and the water was very calm. This trip proved for many to be one of the highlights of the whole week made so by the sunset over this small island with its bird population. After a tour of the island the group headed back to shore using a hill as a landmark. On the way a small beach was found where we beached to stretch limbs and explore. Here children and instructors jumped and danced to the accompaniment of an Indian canoeing song. This activity was initiated by a spontaneous dance done by one of the boys. He was saying with his body that which the group felt but could not put into words.

Thoughts of the Evening. Many teachers could take a hint from the archery expert: to help but not dominate when coaching. Instructors are a part of the total environment. Children want and need to repeat some activities. If a task

does not interest or is not relevant to a child, he rarely gives thought or time in trying to find a solution or understanding. Feeling is seeing. Bodies heaved and strained feeling the air, spray and sun. These moments are to be cherished.

What is a teacher's duty to his students? How far can he travel with them? Children were using the skills learned: canoeing and sensing.

This trip could so easily have been missed if the instructor had adhered unquestioningly to the rules which stated that no canoes may go out in the evening, the reason for this being that if one went, then all would want to go. The writer felt that this was not a good enough reason for an experience like this to be missed. Even if only a few benefited it was better than none.

If only these moments could have been more adequately taped and filmed, but one cannot participate personally and operate the equipment. This, for me, was a personal and profound experience as a member of the group.

The I-It relationship disappeared for fleeting moments and became: all environments being a whole. Might that be seeing? Being is being: it is not that everything is related to everything else, but everything is one and the same. Certainly a multisensory approach to learning!

Day 4

Meeting. There were areas of the planned encounters still not explored, but the instructor felt it better to hand back initiative to the group at this stage. They decided to do some more tracking.

Encounter

Tracking. The trail was laid across a variety of terrains with decoys and false trails to test the groups initiative and awareness. This proved successful in that it prompted the group to split up and all be involved in decision making. They enjoyed and obviously became more proficient at following the ever diminishing clues.

At the trails end, some decided to return to camp while others continued to explore an abandoned farm. Discussion ranged from age, construction and running of the ranch, to excavation of a limb bone of an animal stimulating thoughts on how it may have died. The expert, this time, a boy whose father owns horses.

A more recent garbage dump was found, and explored for the treasures it might yield. A teachable moment regarding pollution! The teaching, however, was somewhat lost to the children's more obvious interest of seeking and finding.

The remainder of day four was lost to encounters as the group were participating with the rest of the children in conservation, R.C.M.P. and geology.

Thoughts of the Day. The children now want to prove how good they are. At the farm fantasies and knowledge were united to give a realistic picture of times past.

The instructor found discussions enlightening and exciting. He too was learning. Questions were asked in order to learn rather than to teach. Serious and sincere questions received sincere answers.

The instructors desire to learn was contagious. How can children be expected to moralize on pollution when this particular 'eye sore' presented them with an open air, free market of treasures? Not to mention the good second hand tire presented to the instructor on this occasion!

Day 5

The previous evening the instructor attempted to plan a suitable encounter that would tie up the previous four day's happenings. Needless to say planned encounters seven and eight no longer seemed appropriate. The following encounter was instead outlined and presented to the group:

Encounter

To Do. 1. Organize the group for the following tasks.

2. Select a site for a shelter.
3. Build the shelter (lean-to).
4. Prepare and light a fire.
5. 'Brew' tea using leaves of suitable wild plants.
6. Serve tea to the instructors.

Given. Matches; tin foil; two polythene sheets; ropes; string; three tin cans, water, and knives.

Limitations. Tins not be placed on the fire. No help will be given by the instructors.

One girl asked "Is this a test"? To which the instructor replied: "Yes, I expect it is. A test with a difference. It is only by extending yourself that you will know what are your capabilities and limits. This problem which we are setting may help you, if you wish to try it".

The rest of the group had already set to work and the girl quickly joined them. It should be added here that the instructors purpose in setting the encounter, in addition to the reason offered to the girl, was:

1. To determine how much learning had been absorbed even though actual teaching of backwoodsmanship had never taken place, at least in a whole group lesson form.

2. To give the students a chance to work together to solve a problem, thus giving themselves reinforcement in a task well done and a realization of what they had learned.

3. To see if the children were capable of applying learning methods of the encounters to new situations such as working with tin foil and devising a suitable 'brew'.

4. To observe the interrelationships within the group and task organization.

Following the serving of tea, the instructor told the group that he would like to talk to them about the weeks encounters and to provide them with an opportunity to share

with others the most important, happiest, most miserable, happenings of the week. Also things learned and experiences gained.

Observations. The group set off enmass to the woodland on the lake side. No group organization was observable but individuals split off from the main group accomplishing different tasks. Children were all talking at the same time, maybe thinking out loud. The site was selected by the girls as previously. It was observed that four members of the group were missing but the remainder did not comment upon this. Without any apparent delegation of responsibility jobs were getting done. However, one girl reading things 'to do' decided that organization meant choosing a leader, so this was done, one boy being unanimously selected. He then started very efficiently delegating tasks.

The groups consideration for the surrounding trees was pleasingly noticed, and an attempt made to compensate for the fire being too close to the trees.

At this stage the missing members drew comment and one instructor went out to go and search for them. They were found near the beach, having built a very successful lean to, lit a fire and were already making tea. They had no tin foil but had devised an alternative method of heating water. This group too had selected a leader. After drinking tea with them, the instructor and small group rejoined the others, to find that they too, had just completed their task.

The encounter was discussed with the children, that they might forward suggestions for improvements. It was commented upon by the instructors how obvious was the children's concern for each other, and how often they praised each other for tasks well done.

Progression of Discussion and Round Off. The children were encouraged to express any thoughts and feelings that they may have on the weeks activities. Not only did they talk about the activities they enjoyed the best, their finds and cherished moments, but many expressed a genuine thanks to other members of the group for teaching and showing them new things.

The group extinguished the fire and went to visit the other shelter. On the way they began to sing evidently feeling very happy with themselves. With an hour still remaining before reuniting with the others (main camp) the group decided to go on one last walk. They found a disused gravel pit in which they ran, jumped, danced and shouted. A snake was found and studied before being released.

As in some previous encounters some members wished to do some filming and taping. As previously this wish was granted.

One girl acting as spokesman gave a very sincere thank you to the instructors. All then returned to camp.

Thoughts of the Day. Children, when aware of their inadequacies will seek out solutions. They need time in order to do this. When no adult leadership is forthcoming

children take on more responsibility. Children get great satisfaction from doing a job well.

The instructor did not anticipate the group splitting up, but apparently the other members anticipated the four boys leaving them.

This encounter more than ever emphasized the fact that a pragmatic approach is far more satisfactory than teaching by a teacher.

It was remarkable how varied the children's individual experiences were, considering that they had been through a fairly united program. They had automatically selected what was meaningful to them personally. In other words they had individualized instruction for themselves.

One boy (who asked to join the group late) was repeating grade 6 and felt considerably inferior. He was, however, the one who the group unanimously selected as their leader, showed considerable talent for teaching (archery), was adept in discussions and informative, constantly praised and helped others,and was sensitive, outspoken and truthful. In all he displayed considerable intelligence, as the term would be defined for this type of program. The writer wonders why he should have been made to feel so inferior through being a repeater and indeed what, in the present school system, has determined that he be one.

Not once has the writer or instructor had to chastize a child. The term "troublesome adolescent" would be nonexistent but for adults!

The words teacher, student and work were at no time, after the first meeting that is, evident.

CHAPTER V

THE FILM

Purpose

To augment the written word with visual impact of natural and anti-natural environments.

To afford the reader opportunity to assimilate the message through a multi-sensory perspective, which may be less than presence in the actual encounter but greater than the written word alone. Hopefully it will increase retention of learning.

To introduce the children to the reader as 'real' people involved in the encounters.

To express that which required non-verbal communication.

To provide a means whereby the writer may express himself creatively.

To allow the reader to assess the results of encounters for himself and to judge the extent to which the approach meets the objectives through observing happenings in situ. This provides means of extending the philosophy into the actuality and presentation of the thesis. An empirical measurement, even if one were possible, of motivation, enjoyment, appreciation, relationships, feelings, fantasies, and enriched learning, would not be appropriate.

For access to the film and V.T.R. see Appendix B.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS

The most important aims of this research program were, or became: freedom for the participants of the encounters to determine how, what and why they wished to learn; to unify the encounters planned and serendipitous encounters in a multi-disciplinary manner with awarenss; and perhaps most of all that children should enjoy their encounters, whether these be 'recreational' or 'learning'.

The writer may assess the overall experience only subjectively, and must place much onus on the reader to do likewise using his senses to 'judge' the filmed report. It follows therefore, that each may draw his own seperate conclusions.

Perhaps the most evident conclusion is that without exception the pioneers did enjoy themselves, almost all of the time. The freedom allowed in interpersonal relationships enabled them to indicate if this were not so, for example "I'm bored". Furthermore they were able to change such a situation by creating for themselves a personal, enjoyable and profitable encounter. The comments at the last encounter show that there were favorite situations, however, the whole experience was enjoyed unanimously. It was new, different and seemed after five days to be acceptable to those persons involved. The children's only dislike was reintegrating

into the conventional learning situation. Maybe this in its simplicity is the most valid conclusion. Is it not this that the children express in their words, their poetry, their joy and their faces? Having seen the film few can fail to recognize the honesty of such a conclusion.

Because encounters were both relevant and enjoyable, motivation was high, therefore, under the original premise the writer assumes that learning would take place readily. This is basic to the Nuffield philosophy: "... that children learn through the solution of practical problems that have significance for them (p.3)". (Ontario School Board, 1972.) Through the S.E.E. approach, a child is drawn into a spontaneous act of learning. Affective learning is almost impossible to judge other than through sensory awareness. The group canoed a considerable distance without mishap. Also, there are many instances of increasing concern for the natural environment, note, for instance, the reaction of Terry following the incidence of the broken egg and lost life, and Monica shielding the young tree from the fires heat at the penultimate encounter.

The long term retention of learning is outside the scope of this thesis but one month after the encounter, letters were received from some of the group saying how much they had gained in terms of personal responsibility, noticed by their parents. They were now, as a result of the week's experience, planning an exploration and camping trip alone during their vacation. Furthermore, they enclosed some

poems which they are still writing.

The writer may conclude personally, upon his thoughts and observations of himself in a 'new' situation. As a teacher with a traditional upbringing and education it was not easy to adapt to the role of a group member, listening and learning, as opposed to passing on information which was not asked for. It was learned that it is quite acceptable, at times when demands are low, 'to do ones own thing'. Indeed, in the case of shelter building and on other occasions, this proved to be a rather effective 'teaching' method.

The pre-encounter planning is of utmost importance, without it the S.E.E. approach would in all probability have lead to a passive experience.

The instructor's role is a quiet yet a very active one.

Control of encounters is essentially through trust, questioning, and non-verbal communications: evidently the personality of an instructor is of paramount importance - strive to know yourself.

The encounters were real. There was no need to play 'let's pretend'.

Relection and fantasizing is just as important as preparing and doing.

All of this is eminiscent of the Persian fairy tale of the Three Princes of the Isle of Serendip (Ceylon) who periodically would sally forth on to the mainland in search of one thing or another. While they never fulfilled

any of their intended missions, they always returned with <u>other</u> discoveries or experiences even more marvelous. Hence, the term serendipity - the finding valuable or agreeable things not sought for (p.178).(Isaac,1972.)

<u>Possible direction for future research for those that might be so motivated</u>:

1. Devote your time to studying that which interests you.

2. Start in your own "backyard"!

3. Be prepared to forget or reconsider all that has been learned.

4. If you lose interest drop everything and start again.

5. Be prepared to laugh at logic and ridicule the claims of reason.

6. Remember: it is a very subtle touch that leads to seeing beyond that which is thought possible.

7. Further indepth study in the role of the instructor in the S.E.E. approach.

8. A follow up study with the same group of children in a similar environment, say after a period of one year, to determine the retention of learning.

9. That a similar program be run in an isolated setting.

10. A program be developed for younger elementary school children.

11. That a course for would be instructors be developed along similar lines.

12. That a program with a similar philosophy be developed indoors within the school system.

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APPENDIX A

REFERENCE LIBRARY FOR STUDENTS' USE.

PROVIDED FOR THEIR INTEREST

AND/OR

HELP WITH RESEARCH AND STUDIES

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APPENDIX B.

ACCESS TO FILM

AND

VTR

The VTR of the film "An Experiment in Outdoor Education," subtitled "Outdoor Education for Serendipity & Survival," Accession Number A-0165, can be found in The VTR Library at the Audiovisual Media Centre.

APPENDIX C.

SELECTED CHILDRENS' POEMS

AS COMPOSED AND WRITTEN

BY

MEMBERS OF THE PIONEER GROUP.

THE WIND

The wind blows through the trees,
It gently blew through
the leaves and sends a shiver
down my back,
I close my eyes and think
about the future.
What I'm going to do when
I'm older.
I open my eyes again
and my thoughts disappear
Just another passing day

NATURE

Nature is many things,
Sounds or noises in the air,
Animals running here and there,
The sound of birds in the air,
The caw of a blackbird here and there,
The sound of the wind through the trees,
But there are many things you cannot see.

There are eggs in a nest,
That mother thinks it's the best,
The father's never around,
But when he hears a sound,
He goes back to his nest,
Because to him,
His family's the best.

Nature has feeling,
Like humans too,
So don't kill it,
It's just like you.

BIRDS

Birds are always chirping in the air,
But only when the day is dry and fair.
The birds are always calling to each other
It seems like every bird is a brother.
You hardly ever see
Two birds fighting in a tree,
But then you look at man
And see war throughout the land.

Birds flying through the air
Hardly giving a care
Birds are free
Free as any body can be.

ALONE

I notice a lot more things when I'm alone than when I'm with a group. There are a lot of bird calls. Some of them you'd think they weren't birds because they make such a funny noise.

There are many different kinds of plant life here with so many different shapes, and sizes.

I feel happier alone. You notice almost every noise and every movement.

I have noticed something I have gone right past but never knew it before, mushrooms growing on a dead tree.

NATURE

Flowers are all shapes and sizes.
Dew is out when the sun rises
Bugs are crawling all around
Up in trees and on the ground.

Birds are free in the air
Bears have come from their lair
Plants are white and purple too
And the air turns a light blue.

BUTTERFLYS

Butterflys are beautiful and colorful
And nice. They fly so beautiful and grace
And they always have keeped in pace
The butterflys are so colorful to see
With beautiful wings of gold you can not tell
if they are a he or
she.

The blue ones are the best
There are butterflys east and west
The butterflys fly about this land
not a trouble or worry about on his hands
The butterflys fly around up and
down east and west until they hit the
ground
the butterflys some times are pests
but they do help us there best
When they fly up and down east and
west they trie the fly their best

Everyone tries to fly
sometimes some butterflys die when they trie
Butterflys, Butterflys are all over the place
They are all keeping in the pace
Butterflys, Butterfly, Butterflys Do.

POLLUTION

Pollution is a terrible thing,
The river is dirty,
The air is musty,
Things are dusty.

All these things are made by man,
They make pollution around a bend,
But no one at all,
Will know the end.

LIFE

Where did it all begin?
Where will it end?
When will my life end?
Will I come back to life?
Will I go to heaven,
Or hell?
No one knows,
What the future holds,
You'll only know,
When your time comes.

The sun is slowly going down,
The shadows disappear from behind the trees and rocks,
All of a sudden I feel alone
I realize there is nobody to play with
I will just have to learn how to enjoy myself.

Today has ended and tomorrow will come,
When it comes it will be today
Just another day to walk through,
And when it has ended,
Tomorrow will come and when it comes
It will be today.

THOUGHTS

Who am i?
What am i doing here?
Why am i here?
Am i like everybody else?
Or am i different?
Am i just somebody else
in this world?
Am I just another object
to add to a collection?
Will I ever know who
i am,
I just know that i'm me!
Just plain me!
Just me!